

**POINDEXTER SLOUGH FISHING ACCESS SITE,
Fiber Optic Line Installation and Easement
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
DECISION NOTICE**

**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region Three, Bozeman
August 2008**

Proposed Action

Southern Montana Telephone Company is requesting a right-of-way easement from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site (FAS) for an underground telecommunications cable extending five feet (5') on either side of a centerline all within the SE4 NE4, Section 34 and the S2 NW4, Section 35, Township 7 South, Range 9 West, P.M.M. Total acres contained within the proposed right-of-way corridor is 0.92 acres.

The proposed telecommunications facilities are typically direct buried to a depth of 36 inches by means of a track-type prime mover with a direct mounted cable plow. The area of disturbance during cable placement is transitory in nature and very rarely exceeds the equipment width, about 10.0 feet. The actual cable placement operation directly impacts no more than 8 to 10 inches of soil. Stream or other water body crossings are accomplished by means of directional boring (horizontal drilling) to avoid alteration of the stream banks and streambed. Upon completion of the cable placement, areas of disturbance are restored to a condition acceptable to the landowner by means appropriate to local conditions such as compaction, grading, hand-raking, reseeding, etc.

Southern Montana Telephone Company, Wisdom, MT, is in the second year of a 3-year, system-wide plan to upgrade their telecommunications facilities in their rural exchange areas of Grant, Jackson, Wise River, and Divide. The purpose of Southern's upgrade program is to replace portions of its aging telecommunications infrastructure with fiber optics, providing state-of-the-art services and technologies to its rural customer base. Southern's proposed upgrade will also provide for redundant/alternate routing of its long distance and critical services such as 911 emergency services providing for increased reliability of these essential services.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on July 11, 2008.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken for 21 days (through July 28, 2008). The EA was mailed to 30 individuals and groups. Legal notices were printed in the *Dillon*

Tribune and the *Helena Independent Record*; and the Draft EA was posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices>.

Summary of Public Comment

No comments were received on this proposal.

Final Environmental Assessment for the Poindexter Slough Fishing Access Site Fiber Optic Line Installation and Easement Proposal

There are no modifications necessary to the Draft Environmental Assessment based on public comment. The Draft Environmental Assessment, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' support of Southern Montana Telephone Company's plan to upgrade their telecommunications facilities in their rural exchange areas of Grant, Jackson, Wise River, and Divide, it is my decision to proceed with granting a right-of-way easement to Southern Montana Telephone at the Poindexter Slough FAS totaling 0.92 acres at the location described in the EA, and installing a fiber optic cable within said easement.

I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Patrick J. Flowers
Region Three Supervisor
